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Questions:

1. Is it worth sending your child to a better school for a better education, knowing they will be socially out casted and mentally scarred?
2. In Chapter 2, a principal mentions how there are teachers that “do not belong in education” but he is not allowed to fire them. How do you feel about tenure? Do you think it hurts more than it helps?
3. The subject of busing is brought up several times in the book. Do you think the school systems should bring back bussing? Is bussing unfair to the kids at the richer schools? Would bussing do more harm than good?
4. On page 196, the principal Joe Clark is talked about. He was well known for expelling three hundred students who were thought to be involved in drugs or violence. Do you think he was wrong in doing this? Should he have tried to help them instead of expelling them? Or was he right in the sense of trying to make the school community a safe place?
5. Often throughout the book, the idea that “money is not the answer…it has to begin at home” is brought up. Do you agree with this? If so, how the state help families and students make changes at home to ensure that students success?
6. It is mentioned throughout the book the inequalities between school districts in states. How much of that do you think the state is at fault for? And how much of that is just because town taxes fund schools and differ from city to city within a state?

Quotes:

1. “When I ask her what jobs they are trained for, she says: ‘Fast food places- Burger King, McDonalds.’” (pg 33)
2. “You can have more crayons; or you can be given a real teacher; or you can have a Bunsen burner someday in a high school science laboratory. But you cannot have all three. You’ll have to choose.” (pg 97)
3. “Nationwide, black children are three times as likely as white children to be placed in classes for the mentally retarded but only half as likely to be placed in classes for the gifted.” (pg 144)
4. “For the brightest kids, the ones who have a chance at four-year college, we cannot provide an AP program. We don’t have the funds or the facilities. We offer something called ‘AT’- ‘academically talented’ instruction- but its not the same as AP classes in the suburbs. So, when they take the SATs, they’re at the extra disadvantage. They’ve been given less but will be judged by the same tests.” (pg 181)
5. “Poor people do not need to be reminded that the contest is unfair. ‘My children,’ says Elizabeth, a friend of mine who lies in a black neighborhood of Boston, ‘know very well the system is unfair. They also know they are living in a rich society.” (pg 215)
6. “A sample of 110 Texas districts at the time showed that the ten wealthiest districts spent an average of three ties as much per pupil at the four poorest districts, even with the funds provided under the states ‘equalizing’ formula.” (pg 259)